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AS PEOPLES GAS PARENT ANNOUNCES 43.5% PROFIT JUMP, ADVOCATES DELIVER 10,000+ PUBLIC COMMENTS CALLING FOR REJECTION OF PEOPLES' \$144M RATE-HIKE REQUEST

Three years after record-setting Peoples Gas rate hike, advocates say far too many Chicagoans are in crisis and they worry about the well-being of families this winter if utility gets \$144 million increase

CHICAGO – Concerned about the well-being of Chicago families this winter, consumer and environmental organizations delivered more than 10,000 public comments to utility regulators Thursday calling for deep cuts to Peoples Gas' proposed \$144 million rate hike. After delivering the public comments, utility customers and leaders of the organizations attended an open meeting of the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) to speak out against the rate hike before the five-member Commission.

"We collected public comments through our door-to-door canvass, on campus, and online - and the response was overwhelming," said **Illinois PIRG Associate Levi Orgas**. "We're proud to stand with over 10,000 Chicagoans who want the ICC to follow the evidence and end the Peoples Gas pipe-replacement program as we know it."

The comments opposing the rate hike—gathered by several organizations, including AARP Illinois, Illinois PIRG, and the Citizens Utility Board (CUB)—were delivered to the ICC the same morning that WEC Energy Group, the parent company of Peoples, **announced** third-quarter profits of \$389.3 million, which is a 43.5 percent increase over last year's third quarter.

In January, Peoples filed for a \$202 million rate hike, the first since its record-breaking \$306 million rate hike in 2023. In July, Peoples Gas lowered its request to \$144 million. In early October, ICC judges **proposed** lowering the rate hike to \$66 million. Consumer advocates have said that's a step in the right direction, but urged regulators to cut the increase even more in its final order due in mid-November.

The utility's troubled pipeline-retirement program is a major driver of rate hikes, with Peoples Gas delivery rates increasing by \$499 million—effectively doubling—since the program began in 2011. Meanwhile, Chicago residents have struggled with an affordability crisis in recent years. In September alone—even before the expensive winter heating season began—almost 160,000 Peoples Gas residential customers were more than 30 days behind on their bills, collectively in debt by about \$85 million, according to **data** the utility filed with the ICC.

While customers suffer, Peoples Gas has prospered. In addition to the jump in third-quarter profits WEC Energy Group just announced, the parent pulled in \$1.6 billion in profits in 2025, and this year Peoples Gas hopes to win record profits for the eighth time in 10 years.

"Based on the petitions and conversations we have with Chicagoans, we know Peoples Gas customers are fed up with escalating bills," said **Karen Tolentino, CUB Español's Clean Energy Outreach and Communications Coordinator**. "We are deeply concerned that another Peoples Gas rate hike will throw even more Chicago families
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into an affordability crisis this winter. While customers suffer, Peoples Gas has turned reckless spending on its mismanaged pipeline program into record profits. We urge state regulators to take note of the pain of Peoples Gas customers, hold the company accountable, and slash this rate hike."

"On behalf of AARP Illinois' 250,000 members in Chicago and older adults across the city, we remain firmly opposed to Peoples Gas' relentless efforts to raise rates," **said Al Hollenbeck, State President of AARP Illinois.** "At a time when older Chicagoans are already struggling with skyrocketing gas bills and being forced to make impossible choices between heating their homes, filling prescriptions, and paying for other basic necessities, Peoples Gas is asking them to pay even more. Chicago consumers should not be expected to continually shoulder higher costs they simply cannot afford. The Commission's decisions in this case will have real and lasting consequences for older adults, retirees, working families, and households across the city. We urge the Commission to stand up for consumers, reject unnecessary rate increases, and put affordability first."

Wasteful spending by Peoples Gas has led to record-breaking rate hikes and threatens to lock Chicagoans into paying for polluting infrastructure for decades after it becomes obsolete. In November 2023, the ICC paused the utility's pipe-replacement program and initiated an investigation. At the conclusion of that investigation in February 2025, the ICC ordered Peoples Gas to reform its approach and retire all remaining iron pipes by the end of 2034.

Peoples Gas presented its new plan for pipe retirement in this rate case. Based on evidence in the rate case that Peoples Gas' plan will produce only one penny of benefit for every dollar spent, Illinois PIRG is calling on the ICC to end its retirement mandate.

Briefing in the case has concluded. The Commission will hold oral arguments in the coming weeks and will make a final decision in November.

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Illinois PIRG is an advocate for the public interest. We speak out for the public and stand up to special interests on problems that affect the public's health, safety and wellbeing.

*For more than 40 years the Citizens Utility Board (CUB) has been Illinois' leading nonprofit utility watchdog group. Created by the Illinois Legislature, CUB opened its doors in 1984 to represent the interests of residential and small-business utility customers. Since then, CUB has helped save consumers more than \$20 billion by blocking rate hikes and securing refunds. For more information, call CUB's Consumer Hotline, at **1-800-669-5556**, or visit CUB's website, **www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org**.*

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, with a membership of nearly 38 million, that helps people turn their goals and dreams into real possibilities, strengthens communities and fights for the issues that matter most to families such as healthcare, employment and income security, retirement planning, affordable utilities and protection from financial abuse. AARP has staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Learn more at <https://states.aarp.org/region/illinois/>.